

NIGHT WATCH



It's a lonely job for the men who patrol the campus after dark . . . a responsible job, too, for the security of the University's buildings is in their hands.

Pictures and story by Jack C. Carr, B.J. '50.



Dusk finds M. U. watchman climbing steps at Jesse Hall to begin two-hour stint of door and window checking there.

NIGHT STARTS on the campus at 6 p.m. It is then that twenty-two watchmen pick up their rings of keys and time clocks and start their rounds. Until 4 a.m. the security of campus buildings rests with them.

James L. Lee (his son Bob is a varsity tackle) is the watchman for Jesse Hall and seven other buildings. Now 64 years old, Lee has made many hundreds of lonely campus tours during more than five years spent on the night watch.

Lee's biggest assignment is Jesse Hall. He spends slightly more than two hours combing the building from the sub-basement below the new auditorium to the upper-most attic. Other buildings on his route include the General Library, Tate Hall, and Swallow Hall. When he has completed his first round, he is at the halfway mark, then he begins all over again.

The loneliness is broken at midnight when Lee and a few other watchman gather in the basement of one of the buildings for "lunch."

"I don't mind working nights," Lee says. "I used to be a cotton farmer in southeast Missouri where we had to work all day and haul cotton half the night, so this isn't bad at all. Anyway, since we came to Columbia, all five of my children have attended the University. Even my wife got her degree here in 1954." Lee, who now weighs 275 pounds, played freshman football for the Tigers forty years ago. ("I wasn't quite so large then.")

What problems face men of the night watch like James Lee? Few, happily. Occasionally a student will attempt to drive across Francis Quadrangle. The watchmen discourage this sort of achievement. It is dangerous, because the students attempt the stunt with lights out to avoid detection.

A "roving patrol" comes in handy during exam periods. It is at these times that Missouri's watchmen are alerted to keep a sharp eye for students who may have a hankering for advance copies of exams that are kept locked up in offices.

At 4 a.m. when he goes off duty, Lee goes home and sleeps three or four hours. Then he gets up and takes the children to school. He stays up until noon when he gets lunch for the family because Mrs. Lee teaches school in the country. An afternoon nap rounds out his day, and by 5:45 he's back in his familiar gray uniform, heading for the watch office, ready for another long, lonely night.



Big Jim Lee selects his keys as he prepares to leave on his route. Failure to learn keys during five-day training period keeps some probationary watchmen from making the grade.



Lee pauses briefly in the applied arts department and casts a critical eye on a modern painting. Upper left, patrolling the stacks in the General Library. At left, in Jesse basement where IBM section is profuse with "Think" signs. And below, deserted corridors greet watchmen whose flashlights probe the quiet darkness.

